



## Look to Jesus for Endurance - April 19, 2020

### OPEN

Haile Gebrselassie was one of ten children born to a farming family in central Ethiopia. At 8000 feet of elevation he ran 10 kilometers to school every morning, and then back every evening. This led to a distinctive running posture, with his left arm crooked as if still holding his schoolbooks. He has been regarded as the greatest distance runner who has ever raced and has many victories and holds 25 world records. Once, when asked what it takes to run like this, he replied, “patience.”

In the last part of verse 1 is the core of this passage – we are told to run the race of faith! How should we run? With endurance! This term has the sense of “**patience**” included in it. Today, we look to Jesus for endurance – and this is the quality that we discover in **Hebrews 12:1-3**.

In Hebrews 10:36 we are told that if we are going to experience God’s promises in eternity, we need endurance right now! Thankfully, our passage offers extremely helpful advice about developing endurance. Consider four key words to capture this advice.

### DIG

#### Witness – verse 1a

Who is involved in this “cloud of witnesses”? We only need to look back to the previous chapter. Hebrews 11 is a “hall of faith”. So, in many ways, all the heroes of the faith are spectators to us who are currently “running the race” of faith. Please notice two verses from Hebrews 11. In verse 13 we are told that these heroes of faith persevered through the brokenness of this world in view of the perfection of the next. Also, please notice verse 27, which highlights the way Moses chose to *endure* [“be strong, hold out”] hardship because he “saw Him who is unseen.”

But better than thinking of these people as *observing* our running, we should think of them as *inspiring* us. It would be like an athlete having their hero in the stands. It is one thing for the hero to watch the young athlete. But it is something quite powerful for the young athlete to be elevated in their effort by the example of the hero.



When it comes to heroes of the faith, who are “sitting in the stands,” who is it that inspires you to endure?

#### Minus – verse 1b

Would you say that you are patiently enduring in the Christian journey? Here’s another question: what can be subtracted from your life today that will help you become more spiritually vibrant? In Hebrews 12:1b we are told about two kinds of “weights” that work against us.

- a. **Encumbrances** - These “weights” are often those *good things* that weigh us down. Such activities actually distract us from our race of faith.
- b. **Entanglements** - These are not good things, but quite specifically these are the sins which trap us and tangle us up – they are self-destructive.

Though either of these obstacles could have been a reference to an athlete shedding unwanted pounds, it is likely more a description of casting off clothing that would hinder efficient running. So, when Hebrews 12:1b when we are told to “lay aside” or “throw off” we need to understand that this is very intentional and even radical.



What do you need to “throw off” in order to gain spiritual endurance?

#### Purpose – verse 1c

Because “endurance” involves “patience” we are not talking about a short sprint but a long-distance race. And it is in this third part of verse 1 that we see the command. “Follower of Christ...you must run the race of faith with endurance!” But don’t miss the underlying premise of this command: every believer is a *participant* in this race! As we read, there is “a race marked out for us” (NIV). The need to endure pre-supposes this a significant contest, involving *every* follower of Jesus. Yet some believers go to great lengths to avoid this reality.

God has determined a race for each Christian. Are we going to try and run only when it is exciting and we feel that we can accomplish it by our willpower? In the 100 meter race athletes use anaerobic (without oxygen) metabolism which provides short bursts of power. But for long distance events, athletes need aerobic (oxygen dependent) metabolism that results in slow, steady amount of energy. It is this kind of endurance that God wants to produce in our spiritual life...benefiting from the “oxygen” He provides!



In your race of faith, are you relying on your own energy or God's?

### Focus – verses 2-3

The final factor in running with endurance is focus. Verses 2-3 make it clear that we are to “fix our eyes on” Jesus Christ.

In verse 2, the term that it is used actually means to *look away from* one thing in order to *concentrate upon another*.

In verse 3, the term “consider” was used in calculations; “reckon up, count up, consider, meditate”.

What do we see when we focus on or consider Christ? We see the...

- a. Pioneer of faith** - He is the author or originator and the completer of faith. We could say that Jesus both pioneered and perfected the walk of faith. But we cannot just see Jesus as an example only – there is more!
- b. Pattern of faith** - Jesus focused on the prize before Him - for the sake of joy He endured the cross. Jesus forsook the cross's shame - did not respect nor was intimidated by its shame. As a result, He finished the work that God had given Him to do and received His reward.
- c. Possibility of faith** - You see, Jesus' endurance makes our endurance possible. When we “grow weary and lose heart” we must look to Jesus because He too faced “opposition from sinful men”.



As you “fix your eyes” on Jesus and all that He endured, what is most inspiring and motivating to you?

### REFLECT

Last year the program *The Nature of Things* aired an episode called “[The Equalizer](#)” featuring sports scientist Steve Haake who compared athletes from the past with current champions. Haake compared Canadian sprinter Andre De Grasse with Jesse Owens.

Andre De Grasse traded high-tech shoes, starting block, and track for the same conditions Owens faced when he ran 100 meters in 10:30 seconds.

Owens won the gold at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. Running beside a virtual avatar of Jesse Owens, what do you think De Grasse's time was? 11:00 seconds.

Now, developing endurance is not about *comparing then despairing*! We don't try to run against Jesus to see if we can match or better His time! Quite the opposite! Following Jesus means He is much more than an example to which we aspire. By the power of the Holy Spirit He is the energy within every Christian.

Of course, as this passage teaches us, we must allow Jesus' pattern of patient endurance to inspire and motivate us. But He must indwell us! Are you so taken with your situation that you have been failing to look to the example of the Lord Jesus and take the help that He offers to you?

- **Read It Again**

Even though Easter is over for another year, maybe it would be good to go back over the *passion of Jesus* – His suffering and His victory.

Carefully read through **John 19 and 20** and consider...

*How does Jesus' endurance through trial empower me?*

*How does Jesus' endurance towards victory empower me?*

- **Pursuing Jesus**

How are you focusing on Jesus – even pursuing Him? Online, you can check out some powerful stories called “[In Pursuit of Jesus](#)” in which host Rasool Berry travels to several different parts of the globe to better understand how to consider and follow Jesus.

